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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Its Definition, History, System of Teaching and Organization

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THE AMERICAN SOCIETY
FOR THE
EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING
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THE AMERICAN SOCIETY.

The American Society for the Extension of University Teaching was founded in response to a deeply-felt want for a National Association which might assist in promoting the work of University Extension. The friends of popular education feel that the time has come for a better utilization of the facilities for instruction which are to be found in our existing educational institutions.

Experience has shown that this object is accomplished with great measure of success by the movement popularly known as University Extension. The results of this system in several countries—notably in England and the United States—have attracted much attention, and its merits are now widely known.

The American Society has a two-fold work. It is, in the first place, collecting information as to the progress of the movement in all countries, and making it accessible through its monthly Journal to all interested in this system of instruction. In the second place, it is carrying on in not less than six States, nearest its General Offices, an object lesson in Extension Teaching for the benefit of the whole country. Slowly and carefully it is testing the various elements of the system and adapting them to American conditions, and at the same time solving one after another the difficult problems of the work in the training of lecturers, the sequence of courses and the financial support of centres.

To do this work efficiently will require large funds. The only sources of income at present are the fees of members ($5.00 annual fee, $50.00 life membership fee) and the voluntary contributions of friends of the movement. You are cordially invited to become a member of the Society, and to present its claims to your friends and acquaintances who are, or should be, interested in the work. A national movement like this can only succeed when the people take hold of it in earnest, on the one hand, and the colleges on the other.

The membership fee and all other contributions may be sent by postal order or draft on Philadelphia, or by draft on New York, payable to the order of Frederick B. Miles, Treasurer of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, Fifteenth and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia.

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION.

THE aim of the University Extension Movement is to bring as far as possible within the reach of every one the advantages which at present are accessible only to those who can attend the college and university. It endeavors thus to widen the intelligence and enlarge the sympathies of the masses and enable men and women to employ their leisure better and to enjoy it more. In the words of the motto of the London Society, it seeks to make education not "a means of livelihood, but a means of life." It is a natural development of that democratic spirit that has been at work in education for the last forty years, and has removed one restriction after another from the university system.

A generation ago the type of higher instruction in this country was the New England College, where opportunity was offered one sex of pursuing certain branches by a fixed method and in an unvarying order. The American type of a higher institution to-day is a university, where all may acquaint themselves with whatever branches of knowledge they prefer, in any order and by any method. This reform has, however, affected only the small number who are able to pursue systematic courses of study at the university, and the time now seems ripe for a further step which shall secure as many as possible of the advantages of university training to those unable to incur the expense implied in university residence. Experience has shown in other countries that much may be accomplished in this direction by the system of education popularly known as University Extension. This method involves systematic instruction organized in courses of lectures by university professors, with discussions, classes, exercises, examinations and certificates of proficiency. It not only supplies teaching adapted to popular needs, but stimulates the demand for such teaching. It directs readers to the best books in each subject, and, by encouraging habits and suggesting methods of systematic study, helps them to make the best use of such facilities for education as come within their reach.

The University Extension Movement took its rise in England. The movement was begun by Cambridge University in 1873. The London Society took up the work in 1875, and Oxford made her first real effort in this direction in 1885. The growth of the movement has been constant, and now there are over eighty thousand Extension students in England.

The work of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching is of much more recent date, although attempts have been

made at various times to introduce some feature of the work into the United States.

The lecture of the lyceum bureau, the plan of a "correspondence university," the series of popular lectures, given by different institutions, all embrace one or another element of the general method. The most successful effort, however, to introduce this system, as a whole, was made during the winter of 1890–1891, by the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching. This society grew out of a local organization, which was formed in Philadelphia, on June 1, 1890, largely by the initiative and earnest endeavors of Provost Pepper, of the University of Pennsylvania.

In order to profit by the experience in England, the secretary was commissioned to spend the summer months observing the work in Oxford and London. On his return he drew up a report, in which was indicated a general plan of organization. The active work was opened at Roxborough, a suburb of Philadelphia, on November 3, 1890, with a course in chemistry. From the very first the progress of the movement was rapid, and before the close of the season, twenty-three centres were formed, and over forty courses of lectures delivered to an average attendance of nearly ten thousand.

Thus in six months the movement, which had originated in Philadelphia, secured a larger enrollment than might have been expected in years. For this success two reasons appear. In the first place, the system, as developed through nearly a score of years in England, with such modifications as American conditions necessitated, was put into full execution immediately, and bore immediate results. Then, too, the movement was started under favorable circumstances in a city whose large population and thriving and easily accessible suburbs afforded an excellent location for "centres," and where neighboring colleges of the highest rank were freely drawn upon for lecturers. The results of the local movement no sooner became generally known than a universal demand for similar opportunities made itself felt, and over such a wide area that it was impossible for the local society to satisfy it. Accordingly, on December 23, 1890, the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching was organized, as indicated above.

THE SYSTEM OF TEACHING.

The method of instruction by Extension Teaching has been carefully developed, feature by feature, until it may now be said to form a systematic plan which will be successful in proportion as it is conscientiously carried out. This attempt at popular education is distinguished from all preceding efforts by the substitution of

"*courses*" for single lectures, and by the subordination of correspondence work to the actual personal contact and teaching of the "class."

The first element is the "course" of six or twelve lectures, delivered at weekly or fortnightly intervals, at any time during the season from October to May. This period is, however, divided naturally into two terms by the winter holidays. It need hardly be said that the type of these lectures differs widely from that of the university lecture. The purpose of the latter is largely the conveyance of actual, even detailed knowledge of the subject.

The aim of the former is rather to arouse interest and stimulate and direct mental activity. The audience in the one case is made up of those of relatively equal age, preparation and experience. The Extension lecturer has, on the contrary, to address those differing greatly in all these particulars. It is, moreover, a voluntary audience which cannot safely be wearied. He must show them the importance of the subject, and make it at once intelligible and entertaining by connecting it with their own experience. Since the lecturer has to address not only complex elements in one audience, but also audiences varying greatly from one another, there can be no stereotyped form for what he says. As different as is the audience from time to time, so flexible must be his treatment of the subject, so versatile his own mind. He may be a trained specialist, he must be a skilful lecturer. Above all, he must be himself impressed with the importance of the subject and the dignity of the work. These qualities are, however, of themselves not sufficient.

The Extension lecture differs from that of the lyceum bureau in that it is not a single lecture for amusement or even instruction. It is one of a series adapted, doubtless, to profit the mere hearer, but also arranged to stimulate to further work, and no matter how busy the lives of the hearers the lecturer will not have done his work if many are not led to follow up the lectures with systematic reading.

THE STUDENTS AND THE SYLLABUS.

For those who are ready to become students a syllabus is prepared in advance, giving a full indication of the scope of the whole course, and a detailed analysis of each lecture, with references to the best literature on the subject. The mechanical work of taking notes is thus saved, and a means provided of preparation for, and reviewing of, each lecture.

Too much emphasis can hardly be laid on the importance of the syllabus, and the necessity of having it as perfect as possible, both in the features already mentioned and in the series of graded questions which is given in connection with each lecture.

The object of these questions is to excite interest in the subject and to guide the student in the reference reading and to independent work. Accordingly, the first question is simple, and may easily be answered by one who has listened carefully to the lecture. The second is to be answered only by consulting some book of reference. The third may require a comparison of authorities, and the fourth some original thought. The series of questions are to be answered at home, with the freest use of all available aids, and sent to the lecturer by mail some days before the next meeting, that he may have time to examine and correct them. These answers are called, for convenience sake, weekly papers, and are like all the features of the system, entirely voluntary.

THE WEEKLY PAPERS AND THE CLASS.

The weekly papers are returned at the next meeting of the "class," which is held either immediately before or after the lecture. Here is the most open discussion of all points of interest or difficulty either in the subject or its treatment by the lecturer. The latter is prepared to answer all questions, explain misconceptions and promote a clearer comprehension on the part of the students.

It is in the "class" that the best part of Extension work is done. Here the lecturer needs the qualities of a true teacher, and here the disadvantages of non-collegiate study are most nearly overcome.

It is worthy of remark in connection with the "class" that the standard of Extension teaching in England has been gradually brought to such a point that Cambridge has felt justified in accepting the certificates of Extension work in lieu of one year's resident study.

EXAMINATION AND CERTIFICATES.

For those who have attended the lectures and written in a satisfactory manner a certain proportion of the weekly papers, an examination is offered, and on the basis of the weekly papers and the examination a certificate is awarded.

STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS.

A further development of the system of Extension teaching is found in the Students' Associations which have been formed in many places. These take the form of literary clubs, whose objects are to maintain a relation between the students of the local centres to prepare for courses announced, to hold discussions outside the class on difficult points, and to continue the subject after the end of the lectures. The natural result of these associations is the introduction of a much-desired sequence in the courses of successive seasons and

a consequent closer approach of Extension work to the curriculum of the college.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SOCIETY.

The American Society for the Extension of University Teaching has undertaken a work which, like all attempts at higher education, is not self-supporting. The Society is dependent for its funds on an annual membership fee of $5, a life membership fee of $50, and on the generosity of friends of education. This is essentially a missionary movement, and wins the support of all who understand its purposes and methods. No great work in education along higher lines has ever been self-sustaining, in the ordinary sense of that term, and the Society will be obliged to rely on the public spirit of all citizens, rich and poor, for funds to carry on the work. The small contributions of many people will provide ample funds, and the appeal is confidently made to all who believe in a broader and higher education of the masses to lend a helping hand to this movement.

THE OBJECTS OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY ARE:

1st.—To collect information in regard to the progress of the work in all countries and through its publications to make the results readily accessible to those interested in this system of instruction.

2d.—To carry on a practical experiment in University Extension instruction, aiming especially at a solution of the difficult problems involved in the work, confident that such a solution will be a permanent service to American education and render the further introduction of the system throughout the United States a matter of comparative ease.

3d.—To co-operate as far as possible with all institutions and organizations in their efforts toward the extension of university teaching, and to secure in every way possible for the people and for the universities the benefits offered by this movement.

As a means toward the accomplishment of the first object, the Society is collecting a library covering the history, theory and practice of Extension teaching, and is at the same time making more complete the literature on this subject by issuing from time to time monographs by leading American and English educators. The official organ of the Society is a monthly journal, entitled "UNIVERSITY EXTENSION," which serves as its medium of communication with its members, with the various affiliated organizations, and with all friends of popular education.

The second purpose of the Society is being accomplished through the co-operation of the Local Centres, now more than sixty in number, which are under the direct supervision of the General Offices. In their work a special effort is being made to deepen, systematize and

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co-ordinate University Extension teaching, and through actual experience to adapt the principles and methods of the system to the peculiar conditions and educational needs of America.

The Society seeks to attain its third aim by assisting as far as possible in all efforts toward local organization. This is done either through direct aid in establishing Local Centres in the various towns and cities, or intermediately through the co-operation of affiliated societies. The publications of the American Society are made available for the use of similar organizations, and, if conditions admit, the services of its organizers and lecturers are also placed at the disposal of the latter. In order to satisfy more fully the demands made upon it in this direction, the Society has established the University Extension Seminary. The aim of the Seminary is to offer opportunities at once for advanced study of education, both in its historical, theoretical and practical aspects, and for special training in the methods of Extension teaching. In the Seminary is thus afforded for the first time in the history of the University Extension movement a chance of preparing systematically for this work, and through it the Society hopes to assist in a new and efficient way all those desiring the advantages of Extension teaching in any part of the country.

THE LOCAL CENTRE.

The vital point of the whole system is the Local Centre. On it falls the real responsibility of the work. Here the demand for these advantages must be aroused, and from this point the request must go to the nearest University Extension society for help in organizing. The secretary of the latter is always ready to lend personal aid and direction. The first step is the appointing of a small committee for working purposes and a larger council for extending interest in the movement. When the Local Centre is formed, the officers—a president, secretary and treasurer—appointed, the next step is the choice of the subjects and lecturers for the courses it is proposed to give. The Centre must insure to the general Society the payment of the lecturer's fees and traveling expenses. This may be arranged by a previous pledge of tickets, a subscription, or by a simple guarantee fund available in case of a deficit.

Such, in brief, is the history of the movement in England and America, the details of the system of teaching and the organization of the American Society. The results of the first years' work are a great inspiration to all who have the interests of popular education at heart, for they augur well as to the continued usefulness of the Society and the success of the movement.

The General Offices of the American Society are at Fifteenth and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia.

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